DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 477 113 EC 309 923

TITLE	Enlarging the Pool: How Higher Education Partnerships Are Recruiting and Supporting Future Special Educators from Underrepresented Groups. Developing the Special Education Workforce.
INSTITUTION	National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, Arlington, VA.
SPONS AGENCY	Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2003-00-00
NOTE	20p.
CONTRACT	H326P980002
AVAILABLE FROM	National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, Suite 300, 1110 North Glebe Rd., Arlington, VA 22201-5704. Tel: 800-641-7824 (Toll Free); Fax: 703-264-1637; e-mail: ncpse@cec.sped.org. For full text: http://www.special-ed-careers.org/ pdf/enlargingthepool.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Partnerships in Education; *Preservice Teacher Education; Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation; *Special Education Teachers; *Student Personnel Services; *Student Recruitment; Teacher Shortage

ABSTRACT

This guide identifies higher education strategies that effectively recruit and support future special educators from underrepresented groups. It begins with a list of common barriers to recruiting and retaining such students. Principles that make partnership efforts work are identified, such as a focus on connections, publicity, and flexibility/creativity. Ten specific recruitment strategies are explained. These include soliciting prospective teachers from the local diverse population; developing teacher cadet programs in K-12 schools with a diverse student body; including special education during "career nights" or college recruitment fairs; advertising federally funded personnel preparation programs; and soliciting funds from minority owned local businesses. Among seven specific strategies for supporting students in teacher education programs are: having faculty members mentor students; providing learning support for students with disadvantaged educational backgrounds; offering study skills training; and securing funding for student expenses. (Contains 14 references.) (DB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 477 113

Enlarging the Pool

How Higher Education Partnerships Are Recruiting and Supporting Future Special Educators from Underrepresented Groups

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
L. Boyer
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
1

National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education

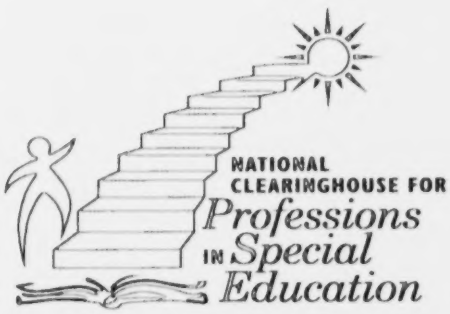
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Developing the Special Education Workforce

EC 309923

Enlarging the Pool

How Higher Education Partnerships Are Recruiting and Supporting Future Special Educators from Underrepresented Groups



A comprehensive focus on developing the special education workforce

IDEAs that Work

U.S. Office of Special Education Programs

Council for Exceptional Children

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Developing the Special Education Workforce

Developing the Special Education Workforce is a series of peer-reviewed publications describing activities of the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education and exploring topics relevant to the recruitment, preparation, and retention of high quality teachers for children and youth with disabilities.

Other titles in this series include:

Strategies for Recruiting and Supporting Underrepresented Groups within High Quality Special Education Teacher Preparation Programs

The Proliferation of Alternative Routes to Certification in Special Education: A Critical Review of the Literature

Proceedings of the National Symposium: Policy and Practice to Ensure High Quality Teachers for Children and Youth with Disabilities

The Road to Tomorrow's Teachers: Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating a State-Based Special Education Workforce Development Initiative

Each document listed above may be downloaded at
www.special-ed-careers.org or contact:

National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education
The Council for Exceptional Children
1110 North Glebe Road
Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201

phone: 800.641.7824 tty: 866.915.5000 fax: 703.264.1637
www.special-ed-careers.org
ncpse@cec.sped.org

The National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education is the descriptive title for the National Clearinghouse on Careers and Professions Related to Early Intervention and Education for Children with Disabilities; Cooperative Agreement H326P980002, between the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Exceptional Children. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of either the U.S. Department of Education or the Council for Exceptional Children. This information is in the public domain, unless otherwise indicated. Readers are encouraged to copy and share it, but please credit the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education.
U.S. Department of Education Project Officer Martha B. Bokee.
Copyright 2003

Challenges and Successful Partnerships

Our schools have a great and growing need for special education teachers, especially teachers from diverse cultures. Virtually every urban, suburban, rural, and sparsely populated school district in the United States is looking for good recruits. The need is great in large part because the student population is growing at the same time that teachers are retiring or otherwise leaving the field of special education. Simply too few potential educators are in the pipeline.

The particular need for special educators from underrepresented groups is urgent. The number of students of color in American schools is increasing dramatically; soon, by most estimates, 40% of U.S. students will be from diverse cultures while fewer than 12% of teachers will be. All our students, including all our special education students, deserve to be taught by highly qualified teachers who mirror the diversity of our society.

Given the shortage of qualified applicants, the task of filling these teacher positions can seem daunting. Yet, as communities in a wide variety of settings are discovering, future candidates for the jobs are all around us. They are middle school and high school students, college freshmen, college graduates and military personnel thinking of career changes, paraprofessionals and support staff already working in schools, and adults considering college for the first time.

In order to move these potential special educators first into the pipeline and then into the classroom, community stakeholders are working together in focused, innovative partnerships. The most common community partners are teacher preparation programs at institutions of higher education (IHEs) and local school districts. They may share resources, collaborate with state projects and alternative certification programs, or form new preparation programs. "Many alternative programs were actually created by universities and local school districts to help alleviate teacher shortages" (Roach & Cohen, 2002, p. 16). These partnerships may also be joined by local businesses, media, and advocates for students with disabilities.

An important goal of these partnerships is to overcome barriers to enrolling and retaining students from underrepresented groups in special education teacher preparation programs. Some of the most frequently mentioned barriers include:

- The decreasing attractiveness of teaching as a profession;
- Lack of academic preparation: "Many students of color are subjected to substandard education from the moment they begin school" (Alliance, 2000, p. 10);
- Difficulties with test-taking;
- The cost of higher education;
- Lack of information about teacher training and job opportunities;
- Not knowing what to expect at IHEs;
- Lack of academic support in programs;
- Inadequate contact with advisors, mentors, and peers.

Partnerships have discovered they need an array of strategies to meet these challenges and increase and retain a pool of diverse special educators. The most effective strategies combine good practice with local plans to solve local teacher shortages.

What Makes Strategies Work

Each partnership's efforts are tailored to specific community needs, but the basic elements of successful strategies can be adapted for any setting. Here, in snapshot form, are some keys to making your own partnerships and programs work.

"A teacher of color in the classroom has an impact on all students, not just students of color. For African American, Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian children, having a teacher of color means having a role model. For white students, having a teacher of color presents an opportunity to learn from an individual who reflects the broad cultural and social diversity that is the bedrock of our national unity."

Alliance for Equity in Higher Education, 2000, p. 6

Focus on connections

First, encourage personal connections. Many young people are attracted to and stay in the special education profession because of relationships with a teacher or student teacher, club advisor, mentor, college recruiter, peer tutor, faculty advisor, person with a disability, and on and on. Creating and nourishing these personal relationships is even more important in diverse cultures. Second, focus on connections between program partners. For example, make sure local high school counselors know the details of local IHE recruitment and financial aid; that area community colleges offer a seamless transition to the local IHE preparation program; and that local schools offer IHE student teachers good field work support.

Spread the word

Recruits are more likely to choose special education careers and your program if they receive important information in the right place at the right time. Use any means available to publicize your program. Go to places where likely teacher preparation candidates are: kindergarten-through-12th grade (K-12) schools (where potential recruits may either work or study), recreation centers, military bases, community colleges, college student centers. Try to have information available when people are likely to make career choices, which means well before the end of high school or when individuals are leaving the military or are ready to switch careers.

Cast a wide net

Look beyond traditional high school seniors for likely program candidates: paraeducators, retired people, community college students, career-changers, and local citizens who have never been to college have all made excellent special education teachers. Look beyond educational institutions for partners: small business owners, boys and girls clubs, citizen advocates, parents, and local media can all have a seat at the table. And look beyond expected government funding for money for your students: small businesses, large corporations, and foundations have all supported the preparation of educators from diverse backgrounds.

Pay attention to both the big picture and the personal details

Programs are driven by important issues: the need to find educators and funding, and to satisfy government mandates and serve community goals. However, finding and keeping potential special education teachers from underrepresented groups also requires attention to individual details. Students are more likely to stay in your program if they each feel valued and supported. That can mean noticing which student needs more time with a tutor, helping a mature student with babysitting expenses, or arranging a small group meeting so student teachers can talk about the stress of field work. In a sense, you're building your program one student at a time.

Be flexible and creative

The traditional teacher preparation models have not been successful enough at keeping diverse populations in the pool; so there's room for innovation, variety, and fine-tuning to meet your needs. Try creative approaches to teacher preparation, including distance education and flexible scheduling. Offer a range of academic help to meet students' different learning styles and requirements, and a mix of social, emotional, and financial supports to keep recruits in your program.

What follows is a menu of recruitment and support strategies that have worked for IHE/school district partnerships. We discuss each strategy as a "stand-alone," but many of the strategies overlap or are easily combined. Throughout, we offer examples of successful programs; at the end of this guide, you'll find contact information

for programs, plus pointers to additional resources.

Recruitment Strategies

These are strategies for recruiting a diverse pool of educators, including diversity of age, color, educational backgrounds and career histories. Some combination of the strategies should meet your needs. Many programs use multiple approaches. New Jersey City University's Department of Special Education, for example, has made aggressive efforts to attract participants from underrepresented groups. The University contacts high school guidance counselors for referrals, sends University students into high schools as recruiters, holds a campus open house, maintains a database of potential recruits, and participates in the University's overall marketing program. Between 1994 and 1999, the percent of non-white undergraduates enrolled in the Department of Special Education went from 10% to 30%; the number of special education majors jumped from 70 to 130 (Hurwitz, 2000). These strategies work.

Strategy 1: Create grow-your-own teacher preparation programs from the diverse population in your educational community.

Grow-your-own programs look for local people who can become highly qualified special education teachers in community schools. These programs recruit people, train them through an IHE/school district partnership, and then place and support them back in the local schools.

Grow-your-owns can focus on any pool of potential recruits, depending on local needs. Some programs train paraprofessionals and clerical support staff who are already working in schools. Others concentrate on local college graduates or individuals with little or no post-secondary education. The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) previously-funded Career Alternatives in Special Education (CASE) program at Southwest Texas State University primarily recruited former military employees or computer industry workers from the nearby area who were interested in a career change. Almost all of the people CASE trained as special educators - 159 so far - have taken teaching positions in schools near their homes .

The grow-your-own strategy works so well because the partners involved, including residents, school districts, and universities, are able to address local requirements in a precise, targeted way. For instance, using this strategy, you can find and train individuals who are well known to a particular culture in your community. A bilingual special educator whom you recruit for training directly from your community's bilingual population will have a much easier time establishing trust and developing relationships with parents than a teacher brought in from elsewhere.

Grow-your-own programs can be particularly effective in meeting teacher shortages in rural and sparsely populated areas. San Diego State University's partnership with a region of 17 school districts in the California desert trained individuals who, for the most part, had grown up and gone to school in the area. As of 1998, of the 71 participants who had earned special education certification through the program, 85% remained in the region. Part of the program's success is its "regionalization" of content to fit local needs and circumstances (Cegelka & Alvarado, 2000).

Strategy 2: Develop Teacher Cadet programs in K-12 schools with large populations from diverse cultures.

Teacher Cadet Programs, also called Teacher Academies, are middle and high school programs that show young people the rewards of teaching and encourage meaningful relationships between students with disabilities and their peers in general education. When these programs are carefully planned and run in highly diverse school settings, students create personal

"Preparing future early childhood educators at Towson University's Professional Development School (PDS) Model has resulted in the increased retention of new teachers hired by Baltimore County schools and other school districts in central Maryland. This project, along with a PDS project in two Baltimore City Public Schools, has also enabled Towson University, a traditionally white suburban university, to recruit African-American students to its programs in Early Childhood Education and Infant-Primary Special Education."

Dr. Terry Berkeley
Towson University

"The successful recruitment of teachers of color, especially African American teachers, requires the collaborative efforts of many institutions and individuals. The creative exchange that is the natural outcome of such collaboration is likely to encourage the development of more creative recruitment strategies. In addition, collaborative efforts send those who are considering the profession important messages about the significance of a future career in the education field."

Goodwin, 2000, p. 169-170

bonds that transcend race, class, and disability. The perception of "special education" changes for these students, their families, and the wider community.

IHE/school district partnerships have found that Cadet programs greatly aid the recruitment of young people from diverse backgrounds into the special education profession. The strategy succeeds for several reasons. First, young people often choose educational and career paths before - and sometimes long before - they finish high school.

The second reason for this strategy's success is the chance for participants to get to know peers with disabilities. Young people who decide to become special educators often say that their relationship with someone with a disability was a deciding factor. This means that your partnership's Teacher Cadet programs can have a lasting impact through the personal connections they encourage.

The South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment has had great success with its Teacher Cadet Program. The program was established by legislative action to offer a one-semester credit course to all high school seniors interested in becoming teachers. The program has now expanded to middle schools.

The South Carolina Teacher Cadet Program devotes two weeks of its one semester curriculum to special education, helping students understand what disabilities are, how they impact the lives of peers with disabilities, and what Cadets could do in the future as special educators to improve their own lives and the lives of those with disabilities. The effectiveness of this strategy in recruiting individuals to the field is apparent: 25% of the South Carolina Cadet students who enter teaching preparation programs have chosen special education.

Strategy 3: Involve students from K-12 schools with diverse populations in after-school clubs that help them get to know peers with disabilities, meet undergraduate special education majors, and assist special education teachers.

Certain student clubs have been excellent recruiting tools for the special education field because they give young people an early introduction to the profession and encourage the kinds of strong relationships that can lead to a career in special education. Clubs such as Future Teachers of America involve secondary students in activities that make teaching attractive. While FTA is not focused on special education professions, it may indirectly attract individuals to the field by facilitating meaningful relationships with peers who have disabilities, especially when a club makes an effort to include both general and special education students.

Ohio's Project Support, a statewide, state-funded network of student clubs, was created first to facilitate relationships between disabled and nondisabled peers and second to address the acute shortage of special educators. The Project's student manual makes the connection clear: "Have you ever thought you might like to be a teacher? Project Support will provide you with an opportunity to 'test the waters.'" Through summer camps and meetings, the clubs train students to be support volunteers for peers with disabilities, and hands-on helpers for special education teachers. Members form strong, lasting bonds with the partners they help support.

While Project Support is still collecting data on the impact that the clubs have had on students' career choices, anecdotally the Project reports that many student members are majoring in education in college and many are already teaching.

Clubs are also effective recruiting tools when they have student-teacher or teacher intern leaders. College and university programs that partner with local school districts find that the student teachers and interns

they place in K-12 schools often act as on-site recruiters both to the institution and the profession. The Title II Teacher Recruitment/Partnership Grant at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos has supported this kind of IHE/school district initiative for the past three years. With IHE student teachers and teacher interns sponsoring future teacher clubs, the partnership can use the personal relationships that spring up naturally between high school students and student teachers to interest high schoolers in special education and the profession.

Norfolk State University follows a related strategy with Adopt-A-School, a program that places University education majors in local schools to attract young people to the profession. In one middle school, University students work as tutors, library aides, and teachers' helpers, and offer the middle school students invitations to University events.

Strategy 4: Present information sessions on professions in special education during "career nights" or college recruitment fairs in K-12 schools and recreation sites. Give information to undergraduates who might pursue special education preparation.

One of the most effective ways to recruit diverse students is to bring information about the college and university programs directly to them. These students often lack the resources to travel to various campuses for on-site visits. When college representatives come to high schools and community colleges and show a genuine interest in students' neighborhoods and communities, IHEs increase the chances of attracting applicants. In Mississippi, the historically Black university, Jackson State University, has representatives from the School of Education accompany University recruiters on visits to high schools and community colleges. These representatives talk with interested Black students about the profession, the teacher education program, and financial aid.

New Jersey City University's Department of Special Education and the CASE program at South West Texas State University are just two of a number of programs that use another method of getting information directly to students: a recruitment video. The video shows multicultural peers engaged in the programs' activities, describes the departments' supportive atmospheres and strong relationships between faculty and students, and emphasize the excitement of starting a career as a special educator.

In addition to recruiting at college fairs, your partnership can offer information sessions about careers in special education through community agencies such as Boys and Girls Clubs and Upward Bound Programs. You may find that TRIO and Title II Gear Up grant-supported youth programs for low income and diverse students also offer good opportunities for presentations. Include information about financial aid, personnel preparation programs in students' own geographic areas, and available supports.

On college campuses, offer information sessions on special education training to students exploring career possibilities. Arrange for talks in campus multicultural centers, sororities and fraternities, and student centers as well as in the Special Education Department. Southwest Texas State University's OSEP-funded TRIP partnership has an intra-university recruitment plan that targets students in the University's general studies programs.

Strategy 5: Help high school students and career-changers move smoothly through the process of applying to IHEs that offer professional preparation for future special educators.

Offering assistance with college admissions is a good way to attract individuals who might otherwise not apply for special education teacher training. "First-generation students have to chart unfamiliar territory when navigating the college-going process;

"Dialogue with our graduates is continuous and during the summer months follow-up phone calls and letters are sent out to update our Graduate Directory. Thirty-nine of our graduates continue to teach special education in North Carolina Public Schools while 21 have chosen to move out of state to teach and one teaches abroad. Some of our graduates move to Virginia due to early employment contracts and higher salaries. More importantly, the retention rate for our graduates is higher than the national average. In addition, they are furthering their education to increase the number of African American special educators in administrative and faculty positions in higher education... Our special education program has a proven track record for recruiting, nurturing, and graduating African and European Americans, persons of a different sexual orientation and individuals with disabilities".

Dr. Cathy Kea
North Carolina A & T University

"Students often make decisions early in life about their career goals. Given an opportunity to participate in activities related to their career choices, students are able to confirm or reject these notions early enough to influence their selection of courses for college. Relative to teaching, students who wish to teach are able to strengthen their skills through hands-on activities beginning in high school."

Minter & Gilliam, 2002, p. 186

typically they lack knowledge of admissions and financial aid procedures. They cannot look to their parents for an understanding of the college experience or for assistance in filling out applications" (Alliance, p. 12).

These potential recruits may be unaware of all the information and resources available. To ease the transition of these future special educators from high school or career to college, your IHE/school district partnership can provide practical help with admissions and financial aid. You can also offer career counseling, drawing on – for example – the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education's (NCPSE's) career profiles (www.special-ed-careers.org), which describe 19 special educator career paths in depth. "Recruits may be more likely to commit to the teaching profession if they have some awareness of the career paths one can follow as an educator" (Goodwin, p. 169). Be sure that community high school counselors, university program recruiters, and school district personnel directors keep these profiles on hand to share with students exploring careers.

Community colleges offer a first point of entry into higher education for many students who value closeness to home and the flexible scheduling that allows them to work full-time. Community college staff are important partners in the effort to recruit potential special educators, providing admissions and program information to assure a smooth transition to the community college and an equally smooth transfer later to a four year institution.

"It is incumbent upon departments of education at four-year colleges and universities to partner with community and junior colleges to encourage students to transfer to their institutions and to select teaching as a career" (Futrell, 1999, p. 32).

Strategy 6: Advertise OSEP-funded personnel preparation programs in local K-12 schools with large populations of students from diverse backgrounds.

"For many, the cost of a college education is prohibitive or will have a debilitating impact on their families. Because tuition rates are high, growing numbers of minority students lack the financial means to go to a four year college or university (Futrell, 1999, p. 32).

Letting potential candidates for teacher preparation programs know about available funding makes good recruiting sense. The information is readily available. The NCPSE houses the most comprehensive database of two and four year special education personnel preparation programs available on line. Programs that are funded through OSEP are highlighted in the database, with contact information about the grant administrator at each listed IHE. Financial aid is available for qualified persons who enter those OSEP funded programs.

Make this database available to help people from underrepresented groups connect with resources that could enable them to enter the field. Encourage students to contact the OSEP grant administrators at IHEs; as always, personal connections can make a critical difference when students are deciding on career paths and college. If your preparation program has an OSEP grant, make sure the counselors at the local high schools in your region know what your program has to offer.

Strategy 7: Publicize supports that personnel preparation programs offer to their non-traditional cohort of students, including tutoring, editing services, and group study sessions.

One of the most successful ways of recruiting persons from underrepresented groups is to let them know they'll be part of a cohort or peer group of individuals who share the same career interests, challenges,

and goals. Preparation programs that successfully retain diverse students offer their cohort groups a variety of social, emotional, behavioral, financial, and academic supports. When potential recruits hear that they'll meet regularly with their cohort to discuss everything from class assignments and scheduling to home and family responsibilities, they're often intrigued and reassured enough to consider entering postsecondary education.

Make sure you let interested potential students know about supports; explain their value in information sessions and publicity. Use local and community news outlets, as well as community and business bulletin boards and door-to-door hand delivered flyers. The Special Education Program at North Carolina A & T State University uses all types of local neighborhood communication outlets, including local supermarkets and fast food establishments. CASE publicizes its OSEP funded program by brochure, website, recruitment film, public service announcements, and advertisements through the Texas Troops to Teachers program.

Strategy 8: Solicit funds from local business owners of color, targeted for tuition assistance for a special educator candidate.

Bringing community business owners into your partnership is practical and valuable . They have a strong interest in the future of the workforce since they will eventually hire individuals with disabilities who are graduating from local K-12 special education programs. They need to see how important competent special educators are, and how local business can and should support local students from diverse cultures who want to train in the field.

Ask business owners in your area to sponsor a specific person who's shown promise academically and who could not pursue a career in special education without financial assistance.

When approaching business partners, make the connection between their investment and their "return" by sharing the success stories of students helped by other business owners' generosity. Take literature with you that highlights the accomplishments of former special education students now working in the community. Explain that these successes are the result of an array of supports, including the involvement of qualified special education teachers. Personalize the connection by introducing business owners to prospective special educators; sponsor open houses in the high schools that spotlight students with disabilities who are pursuing a work-study program.

Engaging these business owners in workforce development may require skills and expertise outside the typical realm of university faculty or school district administrators. Using a public relations firm that specializes in diversity markets can be well worth the cost. NCPSE worked with the Watkins Group, Inc. on the 2002-03 Diversity Recruitment Campaign in six cities in the Southeastern United States, creating a "grassroots" initiative to recruit people in diverse neighborhoods to become special educators.

Strategy 9: Create state-supported financial aid opportunities for people from underrepresented groups who choose special education as a career path.

"Lack of access to adequate financial support shapes many minority students' decisions about going to college" (Witty, 2002, p. 22).

With the clear need for qualified special educators from diverse cultures, state legislatures have been considering funding scholarships, loan forgiveness programs, tuition reimbursement, and other supports focused on recruiting individuals of color to the profession.

Some states, like California and Texas, have seen legislative proposals for tuition-

"I have been working with students with special learning challenges since my 8th grade year at Heskett Middle School. At first, I felt kind of scared. When I got to know the other students, I realized how much fun they are and how much we are alike. The impact the other students have had on me has taught me many things. I learned not to judge a book by its cover. When I'm having a bad day, I only have to step foot in the classroom and the students brighten my day, right on the spot. I sometimes think I'd like to become a teacher."

Cabreena Appleton
Project Support
Student Manual

"Helping with the application process can include showing students what college is like. Develop programs to bring minority students, especially those who are first-generation college students, to area college and university campuses to learn about campus life. The acclimation of students to campus life could include attending such activities as athletic events; seminars; special programs; summer institutes; and workshops to strengthen core academic knowledge, testing skills, and study habits. Participating in such activities before enrollment helps students understand what college life is like; enables them to adapt more effectively; and possibly, increases their recruitment, retention, graduation, and placement rates."

Futrell, 1999, p. 32

free education for paraprofessionals with two years of college who plan to complete teaching certification through a state IHE. Other states, like Tennessee and Florida, have supported minority scholarships and/or negotiated reduced tuition at state IHEs to meet critical needs, including the need for special educators of color. The Alabama State Department of Special Education offers $1,200 stipends to prospective special educators training at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Committed advocacy is an essential piece of the community partnership because so many interests are competing for increasingly limited state dollars. Work with local, state, and national professional organizations to keep the need to train new special educators of color at the top of the political agenda in your state. Propose grants, reduced or free tuition, loan forgiveness, and other financial arrangements. Team with parents and other stakeholders to continually reinforce the message that students from underrepresented groups deserve equitable opportunities to pursue special education careers, regardless of their ability to pay tuition. And remind everyone in the decision-making chain that, in the classroom, highly qualified special educators from diverse cultures benefit everyone: schools, families, employers, and government.

Strategy 10: Use collaborative partnerships to seek OSEP and/or state funds for preparing individuals from diverse cultures for careers in special education.

OSEP targets a portion of its funds directly to colleges and universities that serve people of color - HBCUs, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges, and institutions that serve Pacific Rim/Native Hawaiian Islanders. Competitions for grant funding by the federal government are held once a year and are open to all personnel preparation programs that serve underrepresented groups of color.

One of the most powerful ways you can address the issue of financial aid for students from underrepresented groups is to write a grant proposal that focuses on your IHE/school district partnership. A good example of the kind of proposal that receives state funding in Florida was submitted by Florida's Northeast Personnel Preparation Partnership. This state department of education/IHE/school district collaboration identified the most critical personnel needs of the local schools; then a consortium of IHEs developed an innovative training and certification program to:

- Target uncertified and undercertified special educators teaching in local districts;
- Use a cohort model of instruction;
- Involve teachers and administrators from the schools and district as adjunct professors, mentors, and supervisors;
- Provide tuition and academic support to the cohort.

CASE, an OSEP funded partnership at Southwest Texas State University, recruited educators from surrounding military bases through the state's Troops to Teachers initiative. Retired local special education district directors mentored the students during the program's second year, which is actually a year-long paid internship in local schools where the need is the greatest.

Whether you access OSEP or state funded grants, your system of personnel development will be greatly enhanced by collaborations such as these. These partnerships creatively use an array of resources to build and support the special education workforce.

Support Strategies

The goal of these strategies is to keep students in teacher preparation programs and encourage them to remain in the profession.

The thread that weaves the strategies together is "support." Recruits to your program may need help with academics, finances, stress, personal and professional issues, and more. You can use combinations of the strategies here to reach each individual, and to show all of your students how to access needed resources. As the North Carolina Consortium to Increase the Supply of Minority Teachers discovered, "...success was not determined by the entry skills of the candidates. Success was determined by their willingness to utilize the support that the project provided" (Wilson-Oyelaran, Johnson, Perry-Sheldon, & Vickers, 2002, p. 141).

Strategy 1: Assign faculty members to mentor students who need extra help with enrollment and course selection.

Starting college can be a confusing and stressful experience, especially for students who do not have a family history of higher education.

A supportive mentor who can guide students through the process of applying and enrolling in the program will not only help ensure that potential recruits start the program, but that they remain through completion. This is true whether students are entering special education preparation as first-time undergraduates or mature, returning students. The most effective mentor is usually a faculty or staff member in the special education program.

California State University, Los Angeles has 17 Diversity Projects that match faculty member mentors with community college students of color interested in teaching. The faculty members help them through the process of transferring to the University and finding financial aid (NEA, 2000, p. 53).

You'll find that this hands-on approach to "reeling in" students at the beginning of teacher preparation helps establish from the start the kind of personal relationship that can bind students to your program.

Strategy 2: Provide a learning support center or lab in your School of Education for students whose previous educational experiences have been compromised.

"The historic neglect of K-12 public schools serving minority and poor children has contributed to these students lacking preparation for the rigors of college curricula" (Witty, 2002, p. 23).

Students from underrepresented groups in teacher preparation programs may find themselves struggling with college work and in need of academic and study skills support. Offering these students the help they need makes it much more likely that they'll remain in - and succeed in - the program.

Most IHEs have multiple specialized learning labs, including reading and writing centers, math rooms, library resource rooms, computer centers, and specialized tutoring rooms. However, some students in your program may be intimidated by the size and seemingly impersonal nature of these labs, where individuals seeking help may have to wait in line, take a number in order to be seen, or work alone on computer learning modules.

To make the experience of "catching up" more personalized and productive, provide a physical space for a learning center in the School of Education or the Special Education Department. This will be a place where students can feel comfortable and supported as they work alongside members of their cohort. In this specialized lab, provide staff and resources to help students improve their reading, writing, summarizing, test taking, and study skills.

When you refer students to this learning lab, recognize that some may not know how to access help. Offer orientation, explain how the lab works and what the student might be able to accomplish there, and perhaps arrange for someone to accompany or meet the student on a first visit. Suggest that the student work with the same few lab tutors or staff each time. The pay-off here

"One teacher spoke of how important OSEP funding has been to her. Josie, a special educator who trained at California State University - Chico, wanted to be a teacher from the time she was in second grade. She received OSEP financial support under a personnel preparation grant targeting individuals from traditionally under-represented groups, including those with disabilities. As Josie said, 'The stipend made it possible for me to spend as much time focusing on my studies as I needed.'"

Dr. Lisa Churchill
California State University-Chico

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"We engage in an extensive outreach program in order to attract students to our program at Bethune Cookman College. Recruitment packets are mailed to community colleges. Calls are made to entering students who have not declared a major. Flyers are sent to local churches, barbershops, recreation centers, malls, and radio stations that cater to African Americans and Hispanics are called."

McSwain, 2000, p. 14

"Sometimes the scale of change required is enormous. Students have questions about everything. 'What is college or university all about?' 'How do I pay for my college education?' 'How will my education affect my relationships with my spouse, my family, my people?' 'What will I do with my degree?' The problem for university staff is to provide information so it is less alien, so it can be absorbed into the education or life schema the students presently possess."

Linton, 1991, p. 153

is in helping potentially gifted classroom teachers succeed in your program.

Strategy 3: Assign peer tutors to help students work on academic skills and stress reduction.

Some students, feeling overwhelmed by the pace and volume of assignments, may need a more personal approach to academic support than a learning lab offers. These students may respond more positively to a peer tutor. Clark Atlanta University School of Education, for example, offers peer tutors who work with students on communication skills, computer applications, statistics, and more (NEA, 2000, p. 36). In addition to providing academic aid, peer tutors can give social and emotional support, especially to a student who shows early signs of stress.

Use graduate assistants who already know your program's course material and are willing to share their own strategies for synthesizing and analyzing the literature, meeting deadlines, creating a work plan for assignments, and dealing with multiple demands on time. Peer tutors can also coach reluctant students on the social aspects of higher education life. Acquiring academic and social survival skills can help overwhelmed students adjust and begin to thrive.

Strategy 4: Offer study skills training that will support the requirements of your preparation program.

Study skills training is one of the "perks" that students from underrepresented groups may not have received, either in their previous schooling or at home. Programs often need to teach these skills in order to help and ultimately retain students who are struggling with academic work.

In study skills groups, students in need of academic support can work with peers who have a wide array of abilities and problem-solving strategies. In one model, these groups are organized by course, so group members all do the same assignments at the same time. Another model infuses study skills training into the actual course content, an effective way of encouraging more independent learning.

If your program is built around cohort groups, these offer you a natural way to group students for study sessions. Cohort members can give honest and accurate feedback to each other about individual learning styles, effective listening, and different ways to look at issues. With better study skills, your students should learn to listen more effectively to points raised in class, understand course material better, and retain more of what's presented.

Strategy 5: Provide small group discussion times so students can share frustrations and successes, especially during their practicum and field-related experiences.

Offering regular opportunities for students to talk to each other and program professionals about their teacher training experiences can make the difference between keeping individuals in the program or having them leave out of frustration and a sense of isolation.

Especially once students begin extensive field-based learning experiences, they need support from your program in the form of "venting" and "processing" sessions. They can share their experiences, give each other support and advice, and hear helpful strategies for handling the stresses of work in the field. A scheduled weekly or biweekly seminar can help your students handle difficulties in the preK–12 setting and become more confident and skillful interacting with professors, supervisors, practicing teachers, students, and parents.

At New Jersey City University, students in the Department of Special Education hold monthly enrichment meetings. "Students share concerns and ideas about coursework, schedules, field experiences, and topics of interest in special education, and

receive administrative information with question-answer periods" (Hurwitz, 2000), p. 3).

Strategy 6: Secure funding for student expenses, such as books, transportation, and babysitting, that are not normally covered through traditional financial aid.

Students who enter higher education from diverse backgrounds may not have the resources to buy books, binders, or even paper. Their living expenses may go up after enrollment because they spend more time away from home and commute longer distances. Babysitting expenses, gasoline purchases, meals away from home, and more can tax already tight budgets.

The assistance you give can be in the form of reimbursement for expenses or small grants, or it can be in the form of needed services provided at reduced or no cost.

There are several sources you can explore to find these needed funds. One is private community-based businesses that feel a tie to your IHE and a commitment to local schools. Talk to potential business donors about the students' needs and the importance of supporting a pipeline of high quality and diverse special education teachers for the community.

Another source of funding is large corporations or foundations that may want to earmark contributions for these "niche" expenses rather than for tuition assistance or IHE fees. Make an appointment with representatives of larger corporations or foundations in your region to informally present information about the population of students you're preparing and the great need for these teachers in the community.

You can also submit a formal proposal for a private foundation grant to cover non-academic student expenses. A valuable source of help with such grant writing is the Foundation Center, a national service organization created by foundations to offer information and guidance to grant seekers (http://www.fdncenter.org).

Strategy 7: Explore innovative approaches to teacher preparation, including distance education, small group seminars, and field-based problem-solving.

Recent research on high quality teacher education indicates that innovative approaches to training are helping to prepare and retain more highly qualified teachers of color than are traditional programs. A wide array of IHE/school district partnerships, that include alternative route to certification (ARC), are attracting new recruits from underrepresented groups. According to the National Association of State Boards of Education, ARC graduates are generally more racially diverse, more likely to teach in urban areas that serve students from diverse cultures, and more likely to teach the subjects that are most needed (Roach & Cohen, 2002).

These partnerships and ARCs offer creative and flexible content delivery, course sequencing, field-based training, supports, and schedules. For example, the University of Texas-Pan American offers its College of Education students a night track, created for mature students who work full time. Alabama State University plans to offer distance learning, off campus course work, and mentorship-supported internships. California State University-Chico is training low-incidence specialists in full-day classes using regional training sites, interactive online instruction, and intensive summer sessions.

When developing innovative approaches, consider features that appear particularly effective for preparing teachers from underrepresented groups. These include distance education, small group seminars, and course work that's directly related to field-based experiences. These approaches encourage group problem solving and, later in the field, teacher initiated decision-making in the classroom.

"New Jersey City University emphasizes faculty availability and helpfulness as an important retention tool. The faculty values all students and sees each one as bringing unique strengths to the program; cultural differences are valued. All students have equal opportunities, and this means going the 'extra mile' for everyone."

Hurwitz, 2000, p. 3

"The Pathways to Teaching Careers Program in the South holds regular meetings throughout the year for new cohorts and for current students. The scholars and their families attend picnics, cookouts, and other gatherings to learn more about Pathways and how to communicate with each other and cope with the stresses of returning to college."

Jackson & Bolden, 2000, p. 62

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"At the Pathways Program, a contingency fund was available to cover student emergencies; money was given to students so "their educational progress would not be hampered for want of funds to meet a financial crisis. The funds were used for a host of exacting matters, including payments for rent, car notes, taxis, utility bills, and insurance. While usually small, the amount of money given to scholars to cover emergencies was considered extremely important and helped them cope with situations that could have hampered their ability to continue their education at that point in their lives."

Jackson & Bolden, 2000, p. 64

"The University of Texas-Pan American's College of Education recently partnered with the county Head Start program to provide child care services on campus. The facility provides inexpensive child care, which has proven invaluable for a substantial group of students who otherwise may have left the program or taken much longer to finish their degree."

Alliance, 2000, p. 39

Jose Luis Alvarado: Proving the Value of Federal Funding for Professional Preparation

When he was 10 years old, Jose Luis Alvarado's family moved the few miles across the border from Baja, Mexico to Imperial County. A vast, rural desert region, the county has a population that is predominantly poor, immigrant, and migrant.

Jose Luis learned to speak English in elementary school. In high school he was an indifferent student and was advised by his school counselor to follow his father's employment path into the trades. However, luck intervened and during his junior year of high school, Jose Luis was selected to participate in a summer Upward Bound program at the University of California-San Diego. The weeks he spent on that lush campus by the sea opened new vistas to him and Jose Luis returned to Imperial County determined to attend college.

Following high school graduation, he enrolled in the county's community college and then matriculated to the two-year upper-division Imperial County branch campus of San Diego State University. As a community college student, he participated in the federally-funded EOPS (Education Opportunity Programs and Services) program as well as another federally funded program that targeted students from under-represented backgrounds.

After obtaining a post-baccalaureate elementary education teacher credential at that campus, he participated in SDSU's first federal grant program to prepare special education teachers in Imperial County. Subsequently, he obtained his M.A. degree through another federal grant program offered by the SDSU Department of Special Education, which selected him as the department's outstanding M.A. degree graduate for that year.

He moved from a classroom teaching position into a County Office of Education position where, among his other duties, he served as the County's liaison to SDSU's federally-supported special education teacher preparation programs in that region. He also co-taught courses in the program. When he decided to pursue a doctoral program in special education, department faculty sponsored him for the very competitive California State University Forgivable Loan, which he obtained. This program provides loans of $10,000 a year for three years of doctoral preparation, all of which is "forgiven" if the candidate returns to a California state university as a faculty member for five years.

Jose Luis attended the University of Virginia Ph.D. program with fiscal support from another federal grant program, the Center on Minority Research in Special Education (COMRISE). While there, he conducted an evaluation of the rural teacher preparation grant program from which he had graduated. During his first summer there, he returned to SDSU to teach summer courses for the federal personnel preparation program. After two years in his doctoral program, he accepted an Assistant Professor position at SDSU, with half of his teaching load being financially supported by his COMRISE grant award. This allowed him to finish his dissertation and Ph.D. degree during his first year at SDSU. He now coordinates the Imperial County federal grant program that prepares special education teachers for this diverse region. He also is working on a minority faculty research grant that is federally funded from a program designed to develop and facilitate minority faculty researchers.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Lessons Learned

The strategies presented in this guide are being used to good effect by partnerships around the country. They represent lessons learned so far about the successful recruitment and retention of persons from underrepresented groups in special education preparation programs. The strategies can help produce stories like the one presented here, from a former student at San Diego State University.

Partnership strategies have other benefits beyond recruitment and retention. The OSEP-funded California on-the-job teacher preparation program at California State University at Chico called "Finding and Keeping the Best" found that its program is not only viewed as an immediate response to the shortage of special education teachers, but also as a systemic means to reduce the professional isolation of special educators and to improve the special education teaching profession in a rural region. With creative and collaborative energy, your partnerships can use the strategies here to attract new people to the profession in ways that benefit students, schools, teacher candidates, and the wider community.

"Utah State University's special education personnel preparation program provides distance education course work to nontraditional students, opening access to teacher licensure for persons who live in rural and remote areas of the state. The average age for the majority of the students enrolled in the program is 35. Many work at least part-time as paraeducators in local schools. Others work as full-time special education teachers with emergency licensure.

Courses are delivered via a live, interactive, Internet-based, audio-video teleconferencing system to seven remote rural and urban locations throughout Utah. Additional web-based supports include course syllabi, supplemental readings, study guides, handouts, and assignments.

Many parents of students with disabilities have successfully completed the program and now teach in Utah schools. This nontraditional, parent-friendly, community-based program was the key to their success. Distance university training that does not require them to move or disrupt work and family situations and partners with local school districts that provide support and supervision is essential to meeting their personal and professional needs."

Dr. Rhonda Menlove
Utah State University

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

References

The Alliance for Equity in Higher Education. (2000). *Educating the emerging majority: The role of minority-serving colleges & universities in confronting America's teacher crisis.* Washington, DC: Author.

The Alliance Project. (2000). The importance of minority institutions of higher education in the preparation of special education personnel. Nashville, TN: Author.

Cegelka, P. A., & Alvarado, J. L. (2000). A best practices model for preparation of rural special education teachers. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 19*(3/4), 15-29.

Futrell, M. H. (1999). Recruiting minority teachers. *Educational Leadership, 56,* 3-33.

Goodwin, A. L. (2002). The summer scholars program: Historically Black colleges/universities and leading graduate schools of education collaborating to increase the quality and supply of African American teachers. In N. Jackson, W. S. Bolden, & L. T. Fenwick (Eds.), *Patterns of excellence: Promoting quality in teaching through diversity* (pp. 149-172). Atlanta: Southern Education Foundation.

Hurwitz, B. (2000). New Jersey City University: Recruiting and retaining diverse groups of students in special education preservice programs. Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago, The Monarch Center.

Jackson, N., & Bolden, W. S. (2002). Response of the Southern Education Foundation to the minority teacher shortage in the South. In N. Jackson, W. S. Bolden, & L. T. Fenwick (Eds.), *Patterns of excellence: Promoting quality in teaching through diversity* (pp. 37-94). Atlanta: Southern Education Foundation.

Linton, M. (1993). Minority recruitment and retention in teacher education: A Southwestern perspective. In J. R. James (Ed.), *Recruiting people of color for teacher education* (pp. 149-172). Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa.

McSwain, A. (2000). Dispelling the myth: Successfully recruiting, supporting, and sustaining practitioners for the 21st century. *The Institute for Equity in Schools Monograph Series, 1,* 15-17. Needham, Massachusetts: Institute for Equity in Schools.

Minter, M. D., & Gilliam, D. (2002). Building the minority teacher pipeline: The Grambling State University experience with precollegiate programming in the Louisiana Consortium. In N. Jackson, W. S. Bolden, & L. T. Fenwick (Eds.), *Patterns of excellence: Promoting quality in teaching through diversity* (pp. 173-188). Atlanta: Southern Education Foundation.

National Education Association (2000). *National directory of successful strategies for the recruitment and retention of minority teachers.* Washington, DC: Author.

Roach, V., & Cohen, B. A. (2002). Moving past the politics: How alternative certification can promote comprehensive teacher development reforms. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education.

Wilson-Oyelaran, E., Johnson, B. L., Perry-Sheldon, B., & & Vickers, L. (2002). Measures of persistence and success: A profile of paraeducators, attributes and behaviors that supported completion of teacher licensure in the North Carolina Consortium. In N. Jackson, W. S. Bolden, & L. T. Fenwick (Eds.), *Patterns of excellence: Promoting quality in teaching through diversity* (pp. 111-148). Atlanta: Southern Education Foundation.

Witty, E. P. (2002). Correcting the minority teacher shortage: Framing the issue, meeting the challenge. In N. Jackson, W. S. Bolden, & L. T. Fenwick (Eds.), *Patterns of excellence: Promoting quality in teaching through diversity* (pp. 13-36). Atlanta: Southern Education Foundation.

Special education teacher preparation programs that contributed to this publication include:

Black Belt and Rural Special Education Personnel Preparation Project

Dr. Willa Bing Harris
Department of Special Education Alabama State University
Montgomery, AL

Finding and Keeping the Best: A Rural Regional Partnership for Recruiting and Retaining Teachers for Children with Low-Incidence Disabilities

Dr. Lisa Churchill, Dr. Mary Jensen, Dr. Michelle Cepello
Chico Research Foundation, Professional Studies in Education
California State University - Chico
Chico, CA

Preparation and Retention of Special EducationTeachers in a Rural Area

Dr. Patricia Cegelka
San Diego State University
San Diego, CA

Collaboration in Transition: The Early Childhood Experience at Towson University

Dr. Terry Berkeley
Department of Early Childhood Education
College of Education
Towson University
Towson, MD

Project PUSH: Preparing Urban Special Hires

Dr. Cathy Kea
Department of Curriculum & Instruction
North Carolina A&T State University
Greensboro, NC

Project TEAM: Recruiting and Training Culturally Diverse Students into a Full-Time Low-Incidence Special Education Graduate Program

Dr. Brian Hurwitz, Dr. Mihri Napoliello
Department of Special Education
New Jersey City University
Jersey City, NJ

Project Support: Early Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Dr. Sally Pisarchick
Cuyahoga Special Education Service Center
Parma, OH

Career Alternatives Program in Special Education (CASE)

Dr. Jo Webber
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education
Southwest Texas State University
San Marcos, TX

Mild/Moderate Special Education Distance Education Program

Dr. Ronda Menlove
Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation
College of Education
Utah State University
Logan, UT

Project EMBRACE

Dr. Arletha McSwain (formerly of Bethune Cookman College)
School of Education
Norfolk State University
Norfolk, VA

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education
The Council for Exceptional Children
1110 North Glebe Road, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201
800-641-7824 TTY: 866-915-5000
www.special-ed-careers.org
ncpse@cec.sped.org

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

[X] This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

[ ] This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").